

DOCUMENT RESUME

RD 165 405

EC 113 349

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TITLE Conducting Student Follow-Up. Instructor's Guide
8.
INSTITUTION Illinois Univ., Urbana. Bureau of Educational
Research.
SPONS AGENCY Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education (DHEW/OE),
Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [78]
GRANT G007604835
NOTE 20p.; A System for the Identification, Assessment and
Evaluation of the Special Needs Learner in Vocational
Education; For related information, see EC 113
341-350

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Evaluation Methods; *Followup Studies; *Handicapped
Children; Identification; Records (Forms); Secondary
Education; Student Evaluation; Teaching Guides;
*Vocational Adjustment; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Special Needs Identification Assessment Project

ABSTRACT

Part of a resource package designed to assist local education agency personnel in improving quality of instruction and supportive services to special needs students enrolled in vocational education programs, the eighth of nine instructor guides presents procedures for conducting a followup of students who have completed the vocational program and who are engaged in work and/or continued training. It is explained that information collected from learner followup should provide the instructor with a reading on the student's level of work adjustment and point out areas within the instructional program which may need to be strengthened. Example documents include a former student interview guide, a sample former student followup questionnaire, and a summary report form on the followup of former special needs students. (SBH)

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

CONDUCTING STUDENT FOLLOW-UP

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The report presented herein was prepared pursuant to Grant No. OEG007604835 from the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The opinions expressed herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education and no official endorsement should be inferred.

INTRODUCTION

This guide focuses in on procedures for conducting a follow-up of special needs learners who have completed the vocational program and who may now be engaged in work and/or continued education. While some of the suggestions for student follow-up offered herein apply to all program graduates, many take into account the unique aspects involved in following-up students with special needs.

By conducting a follow-up of former special needs learners, the instructor can obtain a reading on particular difficulties, if any, experienced by the students in their transition from school to work. This information should be useful in determining areas within the current course (or program) needing expansion and/or revision and should, therefore, prove helpful in assisting presently enrolled and future learners. In addition, a follow-up could identify additional services needed by individual former students.

GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS*

The information which follows will take you through four major steps for conducting a follow-up of former special needs learners. These four steps are: 1) planning the follow-up activity, 2) preparing the follow-up instrument(s), 3) conducting the follow-up and 4) summarizing and reporting the results. Let's take a closer look at each step.

*Several of the suggestions appearing in this section were adapted from:

Phelps, L. Allen. Instructional Development for Special Needs Learners: An Inservice Resource Guide. Urbana-Champaign, Illinois: Department of Vocational-Technical Education, University of Illinois, 1976 (ED 133-940).

Wentling, Tim L. and Tom E. Lawson. Evaluating Occupational Education and Training Programs. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975.

I. Planning for Student Follow-up

- A. It is quite conceivable that follow-up studies have recently been completed in your district. Therefore, you are advised to check with your immediate supervisor to determine the personnel involved in these activities. You may find that follow-up has been conducted for individual programs. Or, your district may have a system-wide follow-up policy for all program graduates. A discussion with the personnel involved in earlier follow-up attempts should: 1) alert you to potential problems in conducting your follow-up, 2) provide you with the opportunity for reviewing existing instruments and procedures, and 3) explore the feasibility of coordinating follow-up activities.
- B. Determine the scope of the follow-up activity. Do you plan to follow-up last year's students or will you include graduates from the last five years? Are you going to follow-up on program completers only, or will you include those who dropped out? Will your follow-up include special needs students from some or all vocational programs? If a system-wide follow-up exists for all former students, to what extent are former special needs students considered in the design, implementation and analysis phases of the follow-up?
- C. Once the scope has been determined, the major evaluative questions need to be formulated. These questions should focus in on the objectives of the vocational instruction and supportive services received. The following questions may be considered:
- What is the current employment and/or educational status of the student?
 - Were the original program objectives and the related instruction relevant to job performance?
 - How does the former learner value her/his previous vocational preparation in terms of preparation for employment and/or education?
 - To what extent did the supportive services received aid the student in making the transition from school to work?
 - What, if any, additional services appear to be needed to help the student function on her/his job?
- D. The next step is to determine the method to be used for conducting follow-up for the special needs student. Basically, there are three methods to choose from: 1) the personal interview, 2) the telephone interview, and 3) the mail survey. One, or a combination of the three may be necessary, depending upon the nature of the handicaps of the persons involved. For instance, the telephone or personal interview may be needed for the person with a severe

reading problem. Or, the person with a hearing deficiency may respond best to a mail survey. Additional factors to be considered should include:

- size of the population to be followed up
- amount of monies available for printing, postage and interviewing (e.g., telephone and/or travel)
- number of persons to be involved in conducting the follow-up

II. Preparing the Follow-up Instrument

- A. The major evaluative questions presented earlier (I.C.) will need to be broken down into specific questions. These broad questions need to be specified in order to construct an instrument that collects the type of data desired for identifying student needs and for making program related decisions. For example, the question "What, if any, additional services appear to be needed to help the former student function on his/her job?" may be approached by asking the following sub-questions:

- If you were your boss how would you rate your job performance as an employee?

☐ Excellent
☐ Above average
☐ Average
☐ Needs improvement

- Name one area in need of improvement. _____

- How can this be improved? _____

- Would you want to discuss this matter with an individual from our school? ☐ Yes ☐ No
With whom? _____

- B. If several members are working on the development of the follow-up instrument, each member could assume the responsibility for preparing the sub-questions to a particular major evaluation question(s). After the sub-questions are formulated, the group could convene to review, edit and approve the questions to appear on the first draft of the instrument.

- C. The person(s) responsible for instrument design will also need to consider the respondent's style of communication. Example Document #1 offers several general considerations which could apply to individuals with hearing, visual, movement or other types of impairments. The person who worked closest with the individual during her or his schooling should be the best source to contact regarding individual needs.
- D. Before conducting the actual follow-up, the instrument to be used should be pilot-tested on a sample group of special needs learners who are in school or with a small sample of program graduates. This should be helpful in determining if the instrument/questions are readily understood, and if revisions appear necessary. Example Document #2 provides an evaluation form used for obtaining student critique of a first draft follow-up survey instrument.
- E. Example Document #3 presents a completed sample mail questionnaire, with cover letter. A sample interview guide is offered in Example Document #4. These samples can be reviewed for ideas on:
 - Descriptive information
 - Example questions
 - Sequencing of questions
 - Format

III. Conducting the Follow-up

- A. If an *interview* method (telephone or personal contact) is to be used, the following should be considered:
 - Present the questions orally so that they can be simplified and clarified as needed.
 - A total communication approach that includes lip reading, finger spelling and signing may be necessary when interviewing the student with a severe hearing impairment.
 - Use bilingualists in presenting the follow-up questions and for interpreting the response from students who use English as a second language.
- B. If a *mail survey* method is used the following may be helpful in increasing the quantity and the quality of individual responses:
 - A preliminary telephone call and/or a postcard mailed to former students prior to actual distribution of the cover letter and instrument are two techniques to prepare students for the forthcoming material.

- A questionnaire that is easy to read, neat, organized, with ample space provided for responses and printed on colored paper has been found to increase the overall return rate (Wentling and Lawson, 1975).
- Code the instruments, so that one can determine who responded to the first mailing and who will need to receive another follow-up contact.

Also, response rates to future follow-up activities may be improved by informing present learners of the purpose of follow-up study, showing how the follow-up is conducted and the results used, and by stressing the importance of their future cooperation in this effort.

IV. Summarizing and Using the Report

- A. Once an acceptable number of returns is received, the responses will need to be tabulated and summarized. This tabulation may be done by hand or through the use of a computer. The decision to use either approach will largely be determined by the number of returns, the type of responses sought (i.e., open-ended vs. forced choice items) and the amount of time and resources available.
- B. The summary data should be presented in a brief, easy to understand manner so that the persons receiving the report can get a clear picture of: 1) the purpose of the follow-up, 2) the method used to collect the information and 3) the results of the follow-up. Pictorial displays of the data are suggested. Straight tallies, percentages, histograms, bar graphs and/or averages can be used in these displays.
- C. The results of the follow-up are of limited value unless they are used for program review and improvement. Procedures for reviewing the data and for formulating conclusions and recommendations should be an integral part of the follow-up process. The procedures to be used will depend upon the scope of the survey:
 - If the follow-up involves all vocational programs, the results of the follow-up should be reviewed by all vocational staff members and personnel responsible for providing supportive services. Both vocational and supportive services personnel should also be given an opportunity to review the conclusions and to make recommendations for program improvement. Example Document #5 presents a sequence of events that can be followed in organizing and implementing a system-wide follow-up study of former special needs learners. Suggestions for compiling and utilizing the results are also provided.

- If the follow-up involves a select program or programs, then the program instructor(s) will likely be responsible for conducting the follow-up activity. The instructor should work closely with supportive service personnel and his/her immediate supervisor during all phases of follow-up, but especially during the time when the results are being analyzed and the specific recommendations are to be made. By involving these persons in the follow-up, the instructor will have a means for checking her/his results, conclusions and recommendations and also have a built-in process for communicating program needs and concerns. Example Document #5 offers a format for reporting follow-up results, conclusions and recommended actions.

FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

For additional information on the topic of conducting follow-up of former students see:

Davis, Dwight and Borgen, Joe. Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Career Preparation Programs. Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight Publishing Company, 1974.

Erickson, Richard C. and Wentling, Tim L. Measuring Student Growth: Techniques and Procedures for Occupational Education. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976.

Mason, Ralph E. and Haines, Peter G. Cooperative Occupational Education and Work Experience in the Curriculum. Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1972.

Meyer, Warren G.; Crawford, Lucy and Klaurens, Mary K. Coordination in Cooperative Vocational Education. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1975.

Phelps, L. Allen. Instructional Development for Special Needs Learners: An Inservice Resource Guide. Urbana-Champaign, Illinois: Department of Vocational-Technical Education, University of Illinois, 1976 (ED 133-940).

Wentling, Tim L., Project Director. Student Follow-up Survey. In Locally-Directed Evaluation: Handbook 1. Springfield, Illinois: Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Illinois Office of Education, 1976.

Wentling, Tim L. and Lawson, Tom E. Evaluating Occupational Education and Training Programs. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #1

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING FOLLOW-UP INSTRUMENTS*

-- *Preparing the directions, questions, or items*

- Keep the vocabulary and language simple and concise
- Keep the sentence length short
- Attempt to use words/phrases that will not require finger spelling by interpreters for the deaf
- Consider alternative forms for the instrument, such as putting the questions on a cassette tape, brailleing the instrument, large print, or translation of the instrument to a native language

-- *Selecting the rating or response format*

- Consider using nonverbal scales



positive



neutral



negative

- Use large response boxes for those who have difficulty with fine motor coordination
- Consider using a tape recorded series of questions where students can stop the recorder and orally respond or by brailleing their response

*Adapted from L. A. Phelps. Instructional Development for Special Needs Learners, Department of Vocational-Technical Education, University of Illinois, 1976, p. 318 (ED 133-940).

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #2

Student Evaluation of Pilot-test Follow-up Survey*

Name _____ Date _____

Would you please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

1. How long did it take you to fill out the survey?
2. Was it:
☐ Too short
☐ Too long
☐ Acceptable in length
3. Would you have filled out the survey if you had not received a personal call from your teacher?
☐ Yes
☐ No
4. Were there any questions that were confusing or difficult to answer?
☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, which questions and why?
5. Can you think of any areas that were not covered on the survey that you would like to comment on--criticisms, praise or concerns?

*Developed and used in District 204, Joliet Township High Schools, Joliet, Illinois.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #3

Sample Cover Letter for a
Student Follow-up Questionnaire*

(school letterhead)

Dear (first name)

I am writing this letter to you and your fellow classmates who participated in the I.C.E. program at Lincoln East for two reasons. First, I am interested in finding out how my former students are doing, and second, I am trying to gather information that will help improve the I.C.E. program. The comments you and other students make will identify areas for improvement and change.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope.

Don't be frightened by the apparent length of the questionnaire. Most of the responses only require a check mark or a brief response. The whole questionnaire should require no more than 15 minutes to complete.

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Richard Meyers
I.C.E. Coordinator

Note: Comparable introductory information should be communicated if a personal interview or a telephone interview is used for gathering follow-up data.

*Adapted from Joliet Township High Schools #204, Joliet, Illinois.

FORMER STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE*

Evaluation of Special Needs Services

1. NAME: Rick Wassman Birthdate 4-11-56 Age 21 Sex M
2. ADDRESS: R.R. #2 City Princeton Zip 53531 Phone 239-0967
3. Please check your present status:

☐ Part-time student/ part-time employed	☐ Apprentice training
☒ Employed full-time	☐ Housewife
☐ Full-time student	☐ Unemployed, looking for work
☐ Armed Forces	☐ Unemployed, not looking for work
☒ Other, please describe: <u>Part-time student at Laurel Hills Community College</u>	
4. If employed, describe the work you are presently doing: Heavy
equipment truck driving, general labor at Portage
County M^{ech}anical Division
5. How long have you been employed? 2 1/2 years
6. Please list any previous work:

Place of Employment	Dates
<u>Auer's Grocery</u>	<u>Part-time during high school</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
7. Which of the courses you took in high school were most helpful to
you in your present job?
art, auto repair, woodworking
8. Why do you feel these courses were helpful? Each one taught me
skills I've been using on my job
9. What part of your high school vocational program was of least value
to you? Explain why: All were important and I think
if I had a chance I would have taken more
of them, such as Basic Electricity

*Format reprinted from Instructional Development for Special Needs
Learners by L. Allen Phelps, University of Illinois, 1976, pp. 321-322.
Adapted for use by Albia High School, Albia, Iowa, 1977-78.

10. Check the services you received while you were a student at Princeton. If you check a service, please rate its value to you by circling a number on the right.

	No Value	Some Value	Very Valuable
☒ Counseling	1	2	<u>3</u>
☐ Social worker	1	2	3
☐ Nurse	1	2	3
☐ Summer Math and Reading	1	2	3
☐ Interpreter	1	2	3
☐ Reading Lab	1	2	3
☒ Job Placement Assistance	1	2	<u>3</u>

11. After having taken the vocational courses I found that:

- But needed more*
- a) I had the training necessary to get my job ☒ yes ☐ no
- b) I had enough training to advance in my job ☒ yes ☐ no
- c) My job is one that matches my ability ☐ yes ☒ no
- d) I received enough information on how to fill out a job application ☒ yes ☐ no
- e) I received enough information about how to prepare for an interview ☒ yes ☐ no

12. Did you graduate? ☒ yes ☐ no

13. If no, what grade did you complete? ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11

14. If you left school before graduation, what were your reasons?

15. Do you need additional vocational training? ☒ yes ☐ no

16. If yes, please describe the type of vocational training you need: I'm

taking Machine Trades Instruments and Drafting
at Laurel Hills now. I plan to take Basic
Electricity and Blueprint Reading next semester
so that I can have preparation for a
better job in the future.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #4

FORMER STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE*

Respondent's Name: _____

Year of Graduation: _____ Interviewer: 1 2

1. What is the name of the place where you work? _____

2. What kind of work do you do at your job? _____

3. How many hours per week do you work? _____
4. Do you feel that you do good work?
Yes 1
No 2
Pretty good 3
5. Is your work as good as other employee's work?
Better 1
Yes 2
Not as good. 3
6. Does your boss like your work?
Yes 1
No 2
Somewhat. 3
- 7a. Do you think ISD had enough vocational courses to choose from?
Yes 1
No 2
- 7b. What other courses would you have liked that they did not offer at ISD?

8. Did you have a chance to take courses at ISD that would help you in your job?
Yes 1
No 2
9. What did you like the most about ISD?
Classes 1
Counselors. 2
Instructors 3
On-the-job training . . . 4
Other _____ . . . 5
(please specify)

*Adapted from Instructional Development for Special Needs Learners by L. Allen Phelps, University of Illinois, 1976, pp. 323-324 (ED 133-940).

- 10a. Do you feel your ISD experience prepared you enough to go to junior college or some other job training school? Yes 1
No 2

10b. What was lacking? _____

11. Here is a rating scale. How would you rate the quality of the ISD vocational instructors?
- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Really good. | 1 |
| Good | 2 |
| Okay | 3 |
| Not too good | 4 |
| Bad. | 5 |

12. What suggestions do you have for improving the ISD program? _____

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #5

A SYSTEM-WIDE PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING A
FOLLOW-UP OF FORMER SPECIAL
NEEDS STUDENTS

1. Local administrator(s) prepares for an orientation meeting with all vocational instructors and support services personnel. This meeting is to explain the need for follow-up, procedures to be used and the time-lines for conducting the study.
2. Orientation meeting is conducted. A follow-up committee is appointed (4 to 6 members).
3. Follow-up committee defines scope and goals of the follow-up activity.
4. Selected staff develops instruments (or selects pre-existing instruments) and method(s) to be used for collecting the data.
5. Selected staff pilot tests methods and instruments.
6. Procedures are revised based upon pilot test results.
7. Follow-up is conducted.
8. The data are collected and tabulated.
9. Follow-up committee drafts preliminary report containing the results.
10. Follow-up committee meets with special interest groups to draft conclusions and recommendations. Special interest groupings would include: vocational staff members, supportive service personnel, general education staff members, administration, and vocational advisory council.
11. Preliminary report is prepared by follow-up committee summarizing the conclusions and recommendations and a staff meeting is held for the purpose of discussing and exchanging ideas in general relative to the report.
12. A final draft of the report is prepared by the follow-up committee and disseminated to the school board at a regular meeting and to the community through news media.
13. Instructors, special service personnel and administrators follow through on report recommendations. A select committee should be established to monitor the plan for the purpose of assessing, on a periodical basis, the extent to which the recommendations have been met. Monitoring could include quarterly written reports by staff indicating changes made in classroom operation or modification of lesson plans.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #6

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP
OF FORMER SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

<u>Follow-up Question</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>Recommended Action</u>	<u>Personnel Responsible</u>

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